

themselves with women.” This, therefore, depicts the Church as the “kingdom of priests” established by Christ. This image is further strengthened by the fact that they are given the role of the Levitical priests, who sang in the temple of God.

In fact, if the vision of the 144,000 in Revelation 14 seems familiar, it might be because the scene John describes is almost exactly like the one he recorded in chapter 5.

Rev. 14:1–5 “Then I looked, and lo, . . . stood the Lamb” (v. 1)	Rev. 5:6–11 “I saw a Lamb standing” (v. 6)
“before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders” (v. 3)	“between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders” (v. 6)
“the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps” (v. 2)	“and the twenty four elders . . . each having a harp” (v. 8)
“and they sing a new song” (v. 3)	“they sang a new song” (v. 9)
“these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb” (v. 4)	“[For the Lamb] didst ransom men for God” (v. 9) ²²

The 144,000, therefore, are like the twenty-four priestly elders who offered their lives as a priestly sacrifice to God (see commentary on Rev. 4:4).

Further evidence for this interpretation may lie in the fact that the saints are called the “first fruits.” In the Old Testament the first fruits were to be an offering to the Lord (cf. Ex. 34:26). These who “have been redeemed” have offered themselves to God as a sacrificial offering.

Finally, soldiers who were about to go into battle were also forbidden to engage in sexual relations (Lev. 15:16; Deut. 23:10;